

# ANARCHY 77

TWO SHILLINGS OR THIRTY CENTS

## DO-IT-YOURSELF ANARCHISM





## Do-it-yourself anarchism:

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## Do-it-yourself anarchism

## 1: The anarchist idea

e.w.

THREE YEARS AGO an eighteen-year-old Scottish anarchist was sentenced to life imprisonment by a Spanish military court on charges of being in possession of explosives with the intention of blowing up the Head of State. He is still in a Spanish prison, and we do not know to what extent, or by whom Stuart Christie was framed. After all, in the previous summer, another British anarchist, Donald Rooum, had an "offensive weapon" planted on him by the police, not in Madrid, but in Savile Row Police Station, W.1. But the Christie case served to revive, in the ordinary newspaper-reader's mind, the old stereotype of the anarchists, ticking away like death-watch beetles under the crowned heads of Europe.

In fact, of course, political assassination has been used as a weapon by adherents of every political philosophy and of none. It is one of the occupational hazards of rulers, and as Maupassant tartly put it, "Since governments assume the right of death over peoples it is not astonishing that sometimes people assume the right of death over governments." There are circumstances in which we all approve assassination: who did not regret the failure of the 1944 bomb plot of the German officers?

The reason why the anarchists, whose acts of violence have been insignificant compared with those of their opponents, have been labelled as the exponents of political violence, is easy to see. Their opposition is not directed, like other people's, at this government or that government, it doesn't seek to change one set of rulers for another, it is directed at the *principle* of government. In a memorable catalogue, Proudhon, one of the 19th century anarchist sages, declared that:

"To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated at, regulated, docketed, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, weighed, censored, ordered about, by men who have neither



the right nor the knowledge nor the virtue. To be governed means to be, at each operation, at each transaction, at each movement, noted, registered, endorsed, admonished, hampered, reformed, rebuked, arrested. It is to be, on the pretext of the general interest, taxed, drilled, held to ransom, exploited, monopolised, extorted, squeezed, hoaxed, robbed; then at the least resistance, at the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, abused, annoyed, followed, bullied, beaten, disarmed, garotted, imprisoned, machine-gunned, judged, condemned, deported, dishonoured. That's government, that's its justice, that's its morality!"

Is this simply a peevish Poujadist outburst at bureaucracy, or is it an accurate pre-vision of the essential nature of government as it has manifested itself to millions of people in our own century, when the governments that liquidated Hiroshima and Dresden, and the government that liquidated the Kulaks, celebrated their victory over the government that liquidated the Jews? The violence of authority, claim the anarchists, is not an accidental and regrettable excess: it is the very nature of authority. This is why anarchism, in the dictionary definition, is "a political theory opposed to all forms of government and governmental restraint and advocating voluntary co-operation and free association of individuals and groups in order to satisfy their needs".

A splendid ideal. No wonder Mr. A. J. P. Taylor declared in one of the Sunday papers that "anarchism is the most attractive of all political creeds", and Mr. John Lehmann added in another, "the most appealing—and the most futile". Futile for him because of the "whole trend of modern state organisation towards greater control of the individual". Futile for others because they claim that a network of voluntary organisations is inadequate to cope with the social needs of complex modern industrial societies. Futile for most of the regretful critics of anarchism because, so they say, it ignores the nature of man, his aggressiveness, his acquisitiveness, his urge to dominate.

The anarchists, needless to say, have a whole battery of replies to these objections. We may divide them into those which discuss the nature of human society, the complexity of the modern world, and the nature of man. Anarchists have always laid great stress (in view of the misapprehension that because they are opposed to the state they are opposed to organisation) on the distinction between the state and society. The state, they point out, is one amongst many kinds of social organisation—distinguished from the rest by the fact that its power of coercion is immeasurably greater than that of all the others. Its most striking characteristic is its organisation for war or the threat of war (the trade of government, the "health" of the state). The character of the state as an apparently autonomous war-making machine, feeding off its subjects, is obscured by the fact that it also fulfils certain purely social functions. It is not difficult to demonstrate (it has in fact been done by Professor Titmuss) that the welfare state is the *product* of the warfare state, to relate the educational, health and welfare legislation of this country

during the last hundred years, to the economic and political rivalries between states. Total war demands a totally organised state and a technically competent and healthy population.

But it is not impossible to conceive the apparatus of the social services operating under social rather than governmental auspices. People smile at the anarchist Kropotkin because he used to instance the lifeboat institution as an example of the kind of organisation envisaged by anarchists, but he did so simply to illustrate that voluntary non-coercive organisations could provide a complex network of services without the principle of coercive authority intervening. There are two other examples which we often use to help people conceive the federal principle which anarchists see as the way in which local groups and associations could combine for complex functions without any central authority. You can post a letter from here to China or South America, confident that it will arrive, as a result of freely-arrived-at agreements between different national post offices, without there being any central world postal authority at all. Or you can travel across Europe over the lines of a dozen railway systems—capitalist and communist—co-ordinated by agreement between different railway undertakings, without *any kind* of central railway authority. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the constituent parts of complex federations could not run efficiently on the basis of voluntary associations. (When we have in this country a railway line running scheduled services on time, co-ordinating with British Railways, operated by a bunch of amateurs, who dare say that the members of the NUR could not operate their services without the aid of the bureaucratic hierarchy?) Even within the structure of capitalist industry there are interesting experiments in organising work on the basis of small autonomous groups. Industrial militants regard such ventures with suspicion, as well they might, for they are made not with the idea of stimulating workers' autonomy, but with that of increasing productivity. But they are valuable in illustrating our contention that the whole pyramid of hierarchical authority, which has been built up in industry as in every other sphere of life, is a giant confidence trick by which generations of workers have been coerced in the first instance, hoodwinked in the second, and finally brainwashed into accepting.

To those who say that the anarchists, dreaming of a free society, ignore the nature of man, they reply that it is in fact people who put their trust in authority who forget the facts of human nature and the effect that power over others has on us. No man, as William Morris put it, is good enough to be another man's master. There will always be those who have an urge to dominate others, it is pointed out, and this is probably true, even though we may hope that a different social atmosphere will produce fewer of them. But just as the problem of a Hitler is not that of the psychopathology of one man, but of that of the millions of his fellow-countrymen who put up with him, so the problem of any individual's desire to dominate others is that of those who allow themselves to be dominated. The patriarchal Victorian



father is disappearing from the home because the rest of the family will no longer humour him, just as the Victorian boss in industry is no longer able to behave like one, much as he would wish to, because the workers, sure of their own strength, would simply walk out on him. They have developed resources of their own, *alternative foci of power*. The tragedy is of course that they still *believe* in the principle of authority and have consequently allowed their own organs, in the form of the trade unions and the Labour Party, to become, as any hierarchical organisation is bound to, part of the dominant power structure.

When we look at the *powerlessness* of the individual in the world today and ask why he is weak, the anarchist answers that it is because he has surrendered his own power over his own destiny to others. The anarchist, far from wanting a simpler, less complicated form of social organisation, wants a plurality of organisations, a social *dispersal* of power.

But what about criminal acts and the protection which society expects from them? The anarchist, seeking a solution to this problem (and the state can scarcely be said to have provided one), will emphasise that the law and its punitive apparatus exist primarily for the protection of property and that many categories of crime would disappear in a society where the "haves" were no longer to withhold social assets from the "have-nots". He will remind us that crime is an avenue to affluence and success of a kind, in our highly competitive society, and that the penal system, far from "curing" criminals, reinforces their criminal careers. He will remind us that the intense preoccupation and fascination with crime that people exhibit today indicate the extent to which we *need* our criminals as scapegoats to act out our own deviant fantasies. Sophisticated people smile at the cries for harsher penal measures which used to be a regular feature of the conferences of Conservative ladies, but these were only a vocal reflection of very widely-held views, and it is noteworthy that when one year, Miss Pat Hornsby-Smith pointed out to them that most murdered children were killed, not by prowling psychopaths, but by their own parents, this sobering thought did not quell the cries for blood. It was not what the audience needed to hear. But what about the psychopaths? What about that free-floating aggression which, in both legal and illegal forms, is very evident in our society? What about the immense anxiety and fear which makes people persecute the social deviant?

These are certainly factors which make it hard for people to abandon the institutionalised defences which the state offers. People are afraid of defencelessness. (In another field this explains why they cannot accept the idea of disarmament—they believe that they are actually being defended.) A society which did not rely on institutionalised law-enforcement would certainly require much more social involvement of the individual. It would have to find means of *containing* anti-social acts. No society could hope to *eliminate* them, but it is reasonable to hope that as we learn more of the psychological springs of aggression

and gratuitous violence, we can evolve social forms and social relations less frustrating than those of our intensely competitive society.

We know a great deal about the authoritarian personality, his origins and characteristics and the child-rearing practices and social environment likely to produce him, but we know little about the libertarian personality. He might not be, by current standards, a very desirable character, less ambitious but more obstinate, less passionate but more libidinous. He might be the price humanity must pay for a more humane society. But do we really have to wait for a different kind of man before we can hope to change society? Are those who consider anarchism futile utopianism right after all?

It is a pity that both the recent histories of anarchism insist on treating it simply as one of the interesting offshoots of 19th-century socialism which finally died when Franco's troops entered Barcelona in 1939. For while anarchism may have had its share of what we have learned to call millenarian fantasy, and while the concept of an anarchist society is neither more or less realistic than any other "ideal type" in social thought, there is, among anarchist thinkers, a core of pragmatism which sees the struggle between authoritarians and libertarians as a permanent aspect of the human condition. "We are, in any case," Errico Malatesta insisted, "only one of the forces acting in society, and history will advance as always, in the direction of the resultant of all the forces."

And the moment we look at anarchism not as a destination but as a method, not as one of the also-rans of the political past, but as a living social trend, we see that its relevance is immediate and continuous. The anarchist is an advocate of a *different kind* of social order from the one which surrounds us, and the political processes which are the accepted vehicles of social change are not those in which he sees it useful to participate. They are not his methods and they do not lead to his destination. Is he, as a result, to remain a voice crying in the wilderness like the remoter political sects, or can he find methods of activity and immediate aims which are consistent with *his* ends?

There are an infinity of choices he can make, varying between a rueful acceptance of the world he lives in, with a completely theoretical dissent from its values, and a complete drop-out from the everyday life of work and social organisation, where he inhabits a world of his own. If his choice is the first of these his answer to the question, "But what shall I *do*?" is simple. He does nothing. If his choice is the second he will simply say, "If you all did as I did it would add up to a revolution." But most of us fall between these two extremes. We live in the society we've got, but we want to change it. We want to spread the anarchist idea, we want to popularise the anarchist method. This issue of ANARCHY asks how.



## 2: Shouting slogans about Vietnam

KEN WELLER

A DISCUSSION ABOUT OUR ATTITUDE towards the "National Liberation Front" is important. But it is not the major issue facing revolutionary socialists in Britain today. And it can be a diversion.

Over the past 20 years at least, the history of "left wing" politics has been the history of attitudes towards events taking place—or having taken place—hundreds or thousands of miles away. Long and bitter debates and splits have followed disputes on exactly which bureaucracy to "support" (critically or otherwise) . . . in Spain, Korea, Greece, South Africa, Algeria, Cuba, Bolivia or Black Africa. The story (and the mistakes) have been repeated *ad nauseam*.

These politics by proxy have at least one big advantage: they put no one in Britain in serious jeopardy. People can take extreme "left" positions without actually having to do anything, except sign appeals, pass resolutions, have arguments with other left wing groups—or go around with a collecting box. The papers of the "left" are full of this verbiage. They scream slogans which have no practical consequences here, on the general theme of how to be good revolutionaries without ever actually being uncomfortable. Yet at the same time these travellers of the easy path belabour those who have taken a road which actually means something. These perpetually expatriate revolutionaries usually attack others for lack of revolutionary ardour!

A story is told of Durruti, the anarchist leader in the Spanish Civil War. When Emma Goldman, the American anarchist, asked whether she could become a nurse in his column, he replied to the effect that they had plenty of nurses. If she really wanted to do something she should help the struggle in her own country.

In the 1914-1918 War virtually the whole socialist movement (and not a few well-known anarchists) flocked to the colours of their respective countries. They cried that while they had no time for their own government, "the other side" was so infinitely worse that it had to be defeated, be it Prussian militarism or British imperialism.

In September 1915, at Zimmerwald in Switzerland, those minority socialists who opposed the war came forward with internationalist slogans which are as valid today as they were then. They put forward the right priorities: "The main enemy is in your own country" and

KEN WELLER's article is reproduced from *Solidarity*. (Subscription rate 10s. for 12 issues from Heather Russell, 53a Westmoreland Road, Bromley, Kent.)

"The workers have no fatherland".

It is today possible for various defenders of various regimes—the social patriots in exile—to go through a crowded political life, from one campaign to another, without ever doing a single thing about *this* rotten society, or without ever coming into direct conflict with the authorities *here*. Such a perspective has nothing to do with revolutionary socialism, however radical the phraseology in which it is garbed.

I'm all in favour of a greatly heightened campaign on the issue of Vietnam, but only in so far as it means direct action *here and now*. We are against appeals to the humanity, good sense or intelligence of world leaders, be they those of the East, or the West or of the United Nations. Socialists should be against campaigns, which, however well intentioned, contribute to illusions concerning the real issues and forces involved in these national liberation movements.

In the past we were against granting verbal support to Kenyatta, Kaunda, Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Castro, Nehru, Ben Bella (or Boumedienne). In this we differed from sundry others. Today we do not support Ho Chi Minh. The world is littered with regimes which were "supported", in their formative years, by the "left". As the chickens come home to roost, this "left" must share the responsibility for its past actions, for the illusions which it has sown. There is no need to go on making the same mistakes for ever.

I am for a practical and sensible campaign on the Vietnam war. By being sensible I mean considering the consequences of one's actions beforehand—and not getting caught. This campaign should take place *here and now*. It should be directed at two main targets:

(1) *At the British government's involvement in the war.* The Labour Government helps train US and South Vietnamese troops in Malaya. It manufactures and sells napalm and toxic gases to the USA. It builds and guards airfields in Siam, which are used as US bases. It has sent RAF and Fleet Air Arm "observers" to fly combat missions with the USAF and has even sent a small Special Air Service contingent to the war zone itself. And finally it has sanctioned large consignments of military equipment to Ky's government (the Ford Motor Company alone has sent something like a thousand engines to Vietnam).

(2) *At the American Forces stationed in Britain.* The Vietnam Information Group (96 Stanhope Street, London, N.W.1) has already initiated a campaign aimed at undermining their morale and increasing that growing number of American servicemen who are refusing to fight or deserting rather than go to Vietnam.

Both these campaigns can contain people of differing views concerning the nature of the regime in North Vietnam.

We have no doubt that our position will be misunderstood. That is not our fault. The systematic misunderstanding of other people's positions is now a way of life on the British "left". We can only repeat that a campaign here and now, about matters we can actually influence is the way forward for socialists. It is the only true and meaningful internationalism.



### 3: Pages for an anarchist group handbook

JOHN SCHUBERT

#### PYRAMIDS OR NETWORKS?

AUTHORITARIAN INSTITUTIONS are organised as *pyramids*, libertarian associations as *networks*. The state, the capitalist firm, the public corporation, the army, the police, the church—they are all pyramidal hierarchies with the boss-men at the top and the broad base of dogbodies spread out below. Power, authority, the making of decisions, the status, and the high living, the people who make things happen are at the top. The people that *things happen to* are at the bottom.

The anarchist conception is entirely different. It doesn't demand the changing of the labels on the layers of the cake, it doesn't want different people on top, it doesn't want to overturn the pyramid, it wants *us* to clamber out from underneath. It advocates a spread-out network of individuals and groups taking *their own* decisions, controlling their own destiny. The anarchist theorists envisaged the whole social organisation built upon such local groups: the commune, or council, as the territorial nucleus, the syndicate, or workers' council, as the industrial one, federated together not like the stones of a pyramid, where the biggest burden is borne by the lowest layer, but like the links of a network, the network of autonomous groups.

Anarchism as an individual attitude is a philosophy of personal autonomy. As a social philosophy it is a theory of social autonomy. In either aspect it is, as the word implies, a refutation of the principle of authority. "No masters, high or low" as they used to say in the last century. And the network of autonomous groups is not just a blueprint for a free society, it is something people need today if they are ever to seize control over their own lives, it is something the anarchist movement needs today if it is ever to become socially effective. What is the best method of making anarchist propaganda? Not in the back-rooms of the metropolis, where FREEDOM and ANARCHY are cooked up (though the anarchist press is an essential raw material for the propagandist) but locally, on the ground, on the spot. How exactly do people become infected with new ideas? By contact, by word of mouth, by example, by action. These are things which happen locally or not at all.

Individuals can accomplish a great deal. The impotence of the individual is a myth. Outstanding individuals can accomplish wonders. But most of us are not outstanding individuals and are endowed with quite ordinary talents and potentialities. Association in groups with others in any sphere of life adds enormously to the potentialities of the

individual. A group's output, or its influence, provides an "increment" over and above the sum of the capacities of the individuals composing it.

There are of course, in-groups and out-groups, the internal network and the external network, and they each have a function in the life of a successful group. The external network of a group is the personal network of each individual member and when a group has a need which cannot be satisfied by its own members' capacities, some member has in his own network, some person or some contact which can be drawn upon to supply the lack. The *ad hoc* group which springs up for some particular need is usually simply a regrouping of people from existing networks with an increment drawn from people attracted by the particular function of the *ad hoc* group. This was certainly the experience of CND groups, the Committee of 100, and, most dramatically, of the Spies for Peace.

#### AD HOC ORGANIZATION

"ONE LESSON to be drawn from 'Spies for Peace' is the advantage of *ad hoc* organization, coming rapidly into being and if necessary disappearing with the same speed, but leaving behind innumerable centres of activity, like ripples and eddies in a pond, after a stone has been thrown into it.

"Traditional politics (both 'revolutionary' and 'reformist') are based on a central dynamo, with a transmission belt leading outwards. Capture of the dynamo, or its conversion to other purposes, may break the transmission entirely. 'Spies for Peace' seem to have operated on an entirely different basis. Messages were passed from mouth to mouth along the route, documents from hand to hand. One group passed a secret to a second, which then set about reprinting it. A caravan became the source of a leaflet, a shopping basket a distribution centre. A hundred copies of a pamphlet are distributed in the streets: some are sure to reach people who will reproduce them.

"Contacts are built on a face to face basis. One knows the personal limitations of one's comrades. X is an expert at steering a meeting through procedural shoals, but cannot work a duplicator. Y can use a small printing press, but is unable to write a leaflet. Z can express himself in public, but cannot sell pamphlets. Every task elects its own workers, and there is no need for an elaborate show of hands. Seekers of personal power and glory get little thrill from the anonymously and skilfully illegal. The prospect of prison breeds out the leader complex. Every member of a group may be called upon to undertake key tasks. And all-round talent is developed in all. The development of small groups for mutual aid could form a basis for an effective resistance movement.

"There are important conclusions. Revolution does not need conveyor belt organization. It needs hundreds, thousands, and finally millions of people meeting in groups with informal contacts with each other. It needs mass consciousness. If one group takes an initiative that is valuable, others will take it up. The methods must be tailored to the society we live in. The FLN could use armed warfare, for it had hills and thickets to retreat into. We are faced by the overwhelming



physical force of a State better organized and better armed than at any time in its history. We must react accordingly. The many internal contradictions of the State must be skilfully exploited. The Dusseldorf authorities were caught in their own regulations, when the disarmers refused to fasten their safety belts. MI5 cannot conceive of subversion that is not master-minded by a sinister Communist agent. It is incapable of dealing with a movement where no one takes orders from anyone else. Through action, autonomy and revolutionary initiative will be developed still further. To cope with our activities the apparatus of repression will become even more centralised and even more bureaucratic. This will enhance our opportunities rather than lessen them."

—ANARCHY 29: *The Spies for Peace Story*.

## STUDENT GROUPS

GROUPS SPRING UP like spring flowers in colleges and universities. You have only to call yourself an anarchist in many a seat of learning and some nut comes rallying round. But what do the student anarchists do? Well, very often they invite a series of mini-big-noises from the anarchist movement to come and talk to them and on such occasions a good time is had by all. But is this the way such a group should conduct itself? In the first place, why bring in speakers when you ought to be developing your own abilities in the techniques of effective speaking? You will probably find you can do it better yourself. In the second place, if we assume that universities are really communities of scholars, shouldn't we expect anarchist students to be doing the new anarchist thinking that we talk about but seldom get around to? Paul Goodman, in his new book *Like a Conquered Province*, from which the preface was quoted in last month's ANARCHY remarks:

"The operative idea in participatory democracy is decentralizing in order to multiply the number who are responsible, who initiate and decide. Is this idea viable?

"In principle, there are two opposite ways of decentralizing: either by dividing overcentralized organizations where it can be shown that decentral organization is more efficient in economic, social, and human costs—or at least not too inefficient; or by creating new small enterprises to fulfil needs that big organizations neglect or only pretend to fulfil. Obviously the first of these, to cut the present structures down to human size, is not in the power of students; but it happens that it does require a vast amount of empirical research and academic analysis, to find if, where, and how it is feasible. In the current American style, there is no such research and analysis, and on a hundred and fifty campuses I have urged students to work on such problems, in business and engineering, education and communications, science and municipal administration. The students seem fascinated, but I do not know if they are coming across. (To say it wryly, there is an excellent organization called Students for a Democratic Society, but it is not enough evident that they are *students* for a democratic society.)"

Are there here any anarchist students using the high IQs, their academic training, and the facilities offered by their universities to seek anarchist solutions to one contemporary problem?

Letter to Editor: I have a suggestion as follows: that seminars be conducted by people interested (and competent) in social research and whose orientation is neither Establishment nor Marxist. They would be by invitation. . . . Each one would begin with a carefully prepared paper which developed a *revolutionary* thesis (I do not say necessarily anarchist). That the proceedings of such seminars should be published in pamphlet form. How say you?—WELLWISHER. *London, N.5.*

Reply: Go ahead and do it.—EDITOR.

It is not suggested that student anarchists should do our thinking for us, or that they should confine their activity to the study of anarchism. They could for example seek some control over their own destiny as students. This is a struggle which has been going on for several years in America, and erupted recently in the sit-in at the London School of Economics. "Direct action does work: the monolith *can* be moved," declare the authors of the recent pamphlet on the successful struggle there (*LSE: What it is and how we fought it*, 1s. 6d., from Alan Fowler, 42a Manor Road, London, N.16).

## PARALLEL ORGANIZATIONS

GOODMAN'S DISCUSSION of American student action continues, "The opposite way of decentralizing, by creating new enterprises, better suits the student zeal for direct action, and they have applied it with a lot of energy and some inventiveness. It has been called *parallel development*. Typically students have set up a dozen little 'free universities' in or next to established institutions, to teach in a more personal way and to deal with contemporary subjects that are not yet standard. . . . Some of these courses are 'action sociology', like organizing labour or community development. Students have established a couple of neighbourhood radio stations, to broadcast local news and propaganda, and to give poor people a chance to talk into a microphone. They have set up parallel community projects to combat the welfare bureaucracy and channelize real needs and grievances." He mentioned that he was hired last year by the Associated Students of San Francisco State College who use part of their income in student dues for "untraditional purposes" including "organizing a tenants' organization, helping delinquents in a reformatory, running a tutorial programme for Negro and Mexican children (with three hundred collegian tutors), holding a retreat for 'sensitivity training', sponsoring a weekly television programme, running an 'experimental college' with fifty offbeat courses, and hiring their own professor."

Parallel organizations have of course a much wider relevance than that of student life. A revolutionary workers' council is a parallel organization to management. It is contending for control. A shadow cabinet is not a parallel organization. It simply wants to change the political labels. An anarchist parallel organization is contending for control *from the bottom up*, it is propagating a different style of managing human affairs.

Andrea Caffi put it like this: "As long as today's problems are stated in terms of mass politics and 'mass organization', it is clear that only States and mass parties can deal with them. But if the solutions



that can be offered by the existing States and parties are acknowledged to be either futile or wicked, or both, then we must look not only for different 'solutions' but especially for a *different way of stating the problems themselves*. There are men and women. As units in a 'mass', they submit to uniform rules of housing, eating and dressing, go to the factory or to the movies, vote for a party or acclaim a Leader. . . . Yet each one of them has been a child. Each one has made by himself and for himself, the discovery of the world and of his own consciousness. Each one, as an adolescent has experienced 'unique' moments of love, friendship, admiration, joy of living or unmotivated sadness. Even in the greyest existences there are traces of aspiration to a life less debased, to a real communion with one's neighbours. One can hardly imagine a human life without some moments of carefree enjoyment and enthusiasm, or without dreams. . . . Friendships should be strengthened through some constructive enterprise carried out in common. The aim remains the rebirth of true 'popular' communities. The humblest aims, from an association for mutual help to a club where people meet to spend time together, can eventually lead to an association whose unwritten norms will actually inspire both the private and the public life of its components. Two conditions are obviously indispensable: the first is that the number of people so associated be limited, so as to permit each individual to get to know *well* all his companions; the second is that such an association be not made dependent on an authority endowed with means of coercion."

### PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY

MANY LOCAL CAMPAIGNS and activities go off at half-cock for lack of adequate preparation, adequate knowledge and adequate publicity. Use the local press, the local library, the local talent that is going to waste. Know the potential, know the procedures, know the law. Here is a list of cheap pamphlets and books to help.

*Handbook of Citizen's Rights* (2s. 6d., from National Council for Civil Liberties, 4 Camden High Street, London, N.W.1). Basic information on the law relating to meetings, processions, propaganda, trade unions, arrest, bail, questioning, search and seizure, etc.

*The Worker and the Law* (Penguin Books, 7s. 6d.). Vital handbook for trade unionists.

*Committee Procedure for Clubs and Voluntary Organisations* by Peter du Sautoy (Oxford University Press, 2s.). You may not attach much importance to procedure of meetings, committees, etc., but if you are working in union branches and with other groups and organisations, you need to know the accepted methods, firstly to get things done, secondly to make the most of your opportunities, and thirdly to avoid making a fool of yourself.

*Human Groups* by W. J. H. Sprott (Penguin Books, 3s. 6d.). For basic insight into the nature of groups.

*Incomes Policy, Legislation and Shop Stewards* by T. Cliff and C. Barker (3s., inc. postage, from C. Davison, 83 Greyhound Road, Tottenham, N.17). Basic facts on the Labour Government's incomes swindle.

*Consumer's Guide to the British Social Services* by Phyllis Willmott (Penguin Books, 6s.).

*Guide to the Social Services* (8s. 6d., from Family Welfare Association, 296 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, S.W.1). If your activities fall into the field of social welfare, knowledge of the system is vital, whether you want to make it or break it. These two books are far and away the best available guides.

*Making Posters* by Vernon Mills (Studio Vista Pocket How To Do It Books, 10s. 6d.).

*The Puffin Book of Lettering* by Tom Gourdie (Puffin Picture Books, 2s. 6d.).

*Simple Silk Screen Printing Techniques* by Anthony Kinsey (2s. 9d., from Society for Education Through Art, Morley College, 61 Westminster Bridge Road, London, S.E.1). These are included to remind you that a lot depends on producing attractive propaganda, which, especially in these days of felt-tip pens, Magic Markers, and the widespread availability of duplicators, anyone can do, provided they take the trouble to get in a bit of practice.

FREEDOM every week contains a list of anarchist books and pamphlets available, a list of anarchist groups and in nearly every issue contains reports of the activities of anarchist groups.

### THE PLACE OF FREEDOM PRESS GROUP

WHAT IS THE PLACE of a group like Freedom Press in a live network of groups? Some people on the outside, carrying with them the usual preconceptions of the pyramidal mode of organisation, get the mistaken notion of Freedom Press as a kind of anarchist headquarters. But networks don't have HQs. Freedom Press is one group amongst others, a group whose particular function is the production of anarchist literature in the form of the weekly FREEDOM, the monthly ANARCHY and such books and pamphlets as, operating without any capital other than its slow-moving stock, it can afford to produce. Freedom Press's position is that of the anarchist-communist tradition of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta—consequently its literature, though you must admit it's varied, is likely to be most helpful to "mainstream" anarchists rather than to those whose outlook is exclusively individualist, syndicalist or pacifist.

But there is a wide enough range of approaches and attitudes in the literature produced by Freedom Press for it to have value as raw material for the active propagandist. How can individual readers and groups, other links in the network, best use the output of Freedom Press? Primarily by distributing it. This is more important in the network set-up of minority opinion than in the pyramid of establishment and commercial propaganda. Denied the usual trade outlets, journals like FREEDOM and ANARCHY rely on postal subscription for the bulk of their regular sales, but only a certain kind of person gets round to the business of subscribing by post to a magazine, and too few people see how essential it is for this to be supplemented by a network of distributors. You don't need to have a group to become an outlet for anarchist literature. We all of us belong to a variety of other networks—our associates



at work, in unions, in associations and local activities of many kinds, our circle of like-minded friends—and whatever the shortcomings of the anarchist press, it regularly provides something of value for most points of view.

A word about Freedom Press's organisation problems. It is a voluntary group undertaking the kind of work which is usually done with the much greater resources of commercial organisations. If its members are not to be entirely submerged by paper work it needs to keep its operations simple—credit accounts, apart from tying up capital which Freedom Press hasn't got, involve chasing people for money and an inordinate amount of book-keeping. Distributors help enormously by sending cash with orders or by paying on a *pro forma* invoice, rather than by ordering large quantities of literature on a sale or return basis and then forgetting to send either money or returns. It isn't that anarchists are any less reliable than other people in this respect, just that anarchist publishers are more overworked than other publishers.

(Would-be group organisers who want to get in touch with other readers in their locality shouldn't ask FP for the names and addresses as to give them would be a breach of subscribers' confidence, but should ask for their request to be put in FREEDOM.)

For Freedom Press, an increase in circulation would bring in its trail a whole series of advantages, something nearer to solvency, an improvement in the quality of publications, access to more writers, the opportunity to publish more books and pamphlets, and finally, a greater influence for anarchist ideas.

## 4: On autonomous groups

DOROTHY BLITZEN

AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF GROUPS in general requires the disclosure of the range of conditions necessary for their formation and maintenance and the range of functions which they perform, both for their members and for other parts of the social orders in which they exist. Clearly, no particular group will manifest the complete range of these potentialities any more than any particular individual manifests the full complement of human potentialities. What the study of autonomous groups reveals most clearly, in my opinion, is: (1) dynamic factors that lead to group formation and maintenance; (2) some of the relations of groups to other forms of social organizations; (3) the potential for contribution to individual creative abilities made by

*DOROTHY BLITZEN's comments are condensed from the bulletin on Autonomous Groups, an American publication, now unhappily defunct, devoted to the study of small groups.*

autonomous, peer groups; (4) the probable dissolution of such groups when either their members have achieved the development and satisfactions made possible by the group organization, or the goals toward which it was directed are achieved, or both, and (5) the way in which the increment supplied by the groups is added to larger social and cultural systems.

The fact that common interests, complementary needs, individual inability to achieve desired goals without the assistance of others, and the general need of human beings for the presence of their kind, evokes relatively enduring human associations, including groups, is common social science knowledge. So is the fact that participation in groups evokes particular actions, interactions, norms and sentiments, a cluster incisively disclosed by George Homans. But the unfortunate use of the word group to cover every form of organization has clouded understanding of groups of the kind described here by associating with them phenomena such as hierarchies of relationships, fixed divisions of labour, explicit rules and practices. That these are not necessary attributes of small, autonomous groups is made apparent in these histories. The flux of temporary leadership by one or another member, the fact that individual proclivities result in some specialization of activity, the fact that when particular goals require it they set up programmes for action, should not be taken as indicative of the organizational additions that are necessary to other forms of organization. Indeed, once they are necessary, the degree of individual autonomy manifest in these groups, the informality of their associations, the complete reliance on direct reciprocities between them for decisions for action effecting them all, is immensely curtailed or made impossible.

Autonomous groups are not larger organizations in miniature, so to speak, nor are large organisations simply extensions of small ones. All share the general aspects of activity, interaction, norms and sentiments cited above; but it is the significant differences in what each makes possible or impossible that distinguishes the one form of organization from the other. Social scientists cannot assume, as they frequently do, that generalizations relevant to one form are applicable to another. The people described here could not have evolved as they did or achieved the increment of their group associations if they had not had the freedom to go and come in direct reciprocities which this kind of grouping provides and the corporate organization does not. This freedom is an outcome of access to alternatives that it is the function of the formal aspects of corporate forms of organization to curtail. Autonomous groups survive although their members act with a large degree of individual autonomy. This fact stems from the voluntary nature of membership in the organization. The implications of voluntary are important.

First, it would be difficult to imagine a voluntary group made up of any but peers. The range of inequality between members cannot be great. Even in the instance of a voluntary association of a master and his students, the students manifest a fair repertoire of the master's skills, must approach or even equal his level of intelligence and, over time, narrow the gap between his abilities and theirs. Inequalities in abilities



largely determine fluctuations in leadership in these groups. But anyone who was hopelessly and permanently either greatly more or greatly less able than the majority of group members would not become or remain a part of the group.

Second, the voluntary nature of these groups calls attention to the probable dynamic condition for their emergence. In both these instances, the groups began and ended with a series of friendships. It is a general thesis that autonomous groups promote friendship between members. For the most part, they seem to have a higher level of friendliness than other kinds of groups and certainly some members become friends, but it should be noted that this is not a uniform condition and that enmities also develop. The special point, however, is that friendships were largely responsible for the formation of these particular groups.

Similar interests, goals, skills, talents, or anything else, do not of themselves evoke associations. We often overlook the simple fact that people have to meet. Whatever potential attraction and mutual benefit people might have for one another, their actual unions depend upon countless chance happenings plus some deliberate actions by particular people. Paired relationships are the most compelling in the sense that they permit the greatest range of reciprocity between people. These evoke our strongest attachments. The category of paired relationships that permits the greatest individual autonomy, probably because they involve the least specific dependency, is that of friendship. This is always a voluntary relationship, perhaps the most voluntary of which human beings are capable. It is in friendship that the self of each individual can be most extensively revealed. It is the freest kind of loving. Whatever is of importance to a friend is, for all the reasons that evoked the friendship, important to each participant. Therefore, if a friend suggests friendship with his friends, or membership in his groups, or participation in activities that he performs, there is a high probability that a friend will follow his suggestions.

It strikes me that autonomous groups do not so much promote friendship and sentiments that are friendly as organize them when circumstances bring them together, or particular goals require grouping for the achievement of particular ends. In the end, when the group no longer existed, the individuals and their friendships persisted. There seems little doubt that their friendships were enhanced by their group participation, but it also seems that such groups persist with so few organizational trappings because the increment that flows from friendships is put to the service of a group goal. When friendship does not prevail or, as happens, takes precedence over the group aims, the group dissolves.

Pairs do not themselves expand into groups. As Georg Simmel pointed out long ago, they cannot increase in number and remain the same social configuration. But pairs are organizational devices that often evoke group formation, as in these cases, and are always used as a means of entrance to larger organizations. Recruitment to autonomous groups depends upon friendships.

It is my impression that people who reach maturity, having success-

fully negotiated those stages of development for which group configurations are essential, tend to participate in groups as members only to the extent that particular ends require a number of people in such configurations. The great significance to personal growth and the satisfactions of group membership *per se* greatly diminish as mature people tend to rely on friendships for personal integration. With the extensive development of self-organization and the concomitant self-regulation and competency which is an aspect of maturity, there is less dependence in general upon the actual presence of others.

The dependence of human beings on the validation and approval by some others of what they think, feel and do, for the development and maintenance of self-respect, makes the creative person particularly vulnerable in any society. Recognition implies familiarity. Approval implies past experience, selection and established evaluation. It is obvious that innovators or exceptional people cannot benefit from these conditions. For this reason, creative artists, reformers, inventors of things or ideas, etc., are at odds with established order. Some societies are more flexible than others with respect to the new or different. None are geared to the ready inclusion of marked change. It is, after all, the slowing down of change that makes social systems possible.

In consequence, innovators must rely on paired and group relationships almost entirely for access to the conditions they need for their development and the bridges they must find if their achievements are ever to become part of the established order. For this reason the groups that arise among them have especial importance for people who are unusual in any way. Even the most gifted human being cannot develop and cultivate his gift and make it productive in a vacuum. Communication, consensual validation, correction, suggestion, help, are all necessary for creativity. This is what their autonomous groups provide for the gifted, and these are so apt to be the only means to these requirements, that it is easy to draw the conclusion that group participation always results in creativity. In fact the ability for it must be present in the members. When it is, the enhancement of the talent of each member by the reciprocities between them is as apparent as it is immeasurable. Their abilities develop by virtue of their continuous communication.

#### LOW OVERHEADS AND LONG LIFE

A detailed survey of 1,500 chess clubs we made some years ago spotlighted one fact with astonishing clarity. The longest-living chess clubs have always been those with cheap club rooms.

—Chess, Vol 32, Nos 529-30, May 1967.



## 5: The participation game

ROBERT BEST

EACH OF THE FOLLOWING TEN QUESTIONS carries, provisionally, a maximum of ten points. For the time being each is therefore taken as of equal importance though it is debatable whether this system is altogether sound.

Any number of people may take part in the marking; this in itself is a form of participation, which is not without educational value.

Sooner or later some more definite form of standard may possibly emerge. "Attendance" can be related to a known number of possible attenders. "Preparation" could be related to an organisation such as a sub-committee of a Local Authority, having a reasonable standard of detail in the preparation of agendas, etc., and prior discussion by party or electoral groups.

Bearing this in mind, the marking could be as follows: Very Good = 10; Good = 7; Medium = 5; Poor = 2.

(1) How much thought and preparation has taken place before the meeting? How much has been done to clarify the issues? Do the people attending the meeting come to it with minds prepared?

(2) Are many of the questions and problems, exercising the central group, put before the "out" groups for discussion by and with them? Does this take place *before* decisions are made?

(3) Are many ideas, questions and problems, being submitted to the central group by the "out" groups?

*ROBERT BEST (some of whose experiments were described in ANARCHY 47) has been interested for years in the principles and practice of participation, and has drawn up this Participation Index for assessing "democratic leadership", "participation" and "communications", which can be applied to any meeting or conference of any association of people comprising a central group or committee or individual on the one hand, with "out" groups or individuals on the other. If readers try it out they will find that scores above 70 per cent are rare, all too often less than 50 per cent is earned. Improve your meetings! Work up to a high PI!*

### Suggested Score Sheet

Meeting.....	Date.....
(Very Good = 10, Good = 7, Medium = 5, Poor = 2).	
1. Preparation ... ..	.....
2. Before decision ... ..	.....
3. Prodding ... ..	.....
4. Welcoming ... ..	.....
5. Absence of suspicion ... ..	.....
6. Lively prior discussion ... ..	.....
7. Information ... ..	.....
8. Interest and confidence ... ..	.....
9. "About something" ... ..	.....
10. Attendance ... ..	.....
TOTAL (out of 100) ... ..	.....

(4) Are they (or would they be) welcomed and taken up for consideration by the central group?

(5) Is there an absence of suspicion within the central group that the outer group may interfere with the work of the central group?

(6) Is there free and lively discussions in the "out" groups? Are new ideas, policy or "projects" being canvassed within the "out" groups? Is there "lobbying", in the sense of formal discussion before a formal meeting?

(7) Is *information* (not the same thing as key questions and problems) being disseminated by the central group? Is it frank and full?

(8) Do outer groups appear to follow it with interest and confidence?

(9) Do the meetings appear to be "about something that matters"? Do they lead to any change, or agreement that existing policy is the best under the circumstances?

(10) Attendance, in tenths of a possible total.

### THE SENSE OF THE MEETING

The decisions taken at any Meeting, including committees, are not reached by voting. What are—or appear to be conflicting views are regarded as contributions to the discovery of corporate guidance, and the Minute drawn up endeavours to express that guidance which transcends—though in no way abrogates—the guidance of the individual, and in which, as the judgement of the meeting, all can acquiesce.

—HORACE POINTING: *The Society of Friends*.



## 6: Anarchist group in the country

PETER FORD

WE FAILED TO FORM A GROUP when we lived in a town of about 50,000 inhabitants but succeeded when we moved to an initially less promising market gardening area of the home counties. Perhaps our isolation amongst the potatoes and brussels sprouts inspired us with a greater urgency. The village in which we lived stretched in a drab and uneventful ribbon along two miles of straight road and might have been specifically designed to counteract any tendencies towards community growth. Although we called our group after the village name no one from the village, apart from ourselves, ever attended a meeting.

This is how we began. A number of the younger teachers in my secondary modern school were incensed by the interminable non-meetings which, as members of staff, we were obliged to attend once a month. Twenty minutes might be spent in arguing over the best way to collect hymn books after morning assembly and no time at all was available for discussion of any general educational issue. All the real decisions were taken by the headmaster and his "cabinet" of department heads meeting in secret conclave. So—the dissidents came together and we decided to hold our own meetings off the premises. One of our first meetings included a talk by one of our number who had visited Summerhill.

An announcement to this effect that we pinned to the staff-room notice board was rapidly and anonymously removed by a superior. This attempt at suppression backfired to our advantage and half a dozen of the staff came along. At the meetings which followed, we talked about Neill, David Wills, Teddy O'Neil and Prestolee School, Alex Bloom and St. George's-in-the-East and of course, Michael Duane and Risinghill. We still made some attempt to interest the opposition in our discussions and at one time it seemed that the headmaster and his deputy were thinking of attending—perhaps on the principle "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!". Fortunately perhaps for our progress, we were spared this top-level confrontation.

The authoritarian school is an excellent paradigm for the authoritarian society. It's all there in microcosm—power and privilege, a class structure, laws, police, and an underlife of resistance and subversion. Hence libertarian educational ideas lead naturally towards the idea of a libertarian society. In just this way our educational discussion group evolved and broadened its concerns.

Concurrently we had opened up a new field of contacts as a result of an invitation to talk about anarchism to a local SPGB group. Some-

one at that meeting was a member of the YCND group in our nearest large town and it was not long before we had an influx of rebellious youth bringing with them their concern about the bomb and an angry disillusionment with the Labour Party. Now teachers were face-to-face with recent school-leavers and sixth formers. We began to sell Freedom Press literature although it was a while before we realised that it was no good arranging it discreetly on a table and leaving it at that. No one took any notice until it was spread before them. Later on, when we tried to sell FREEDOM in the streets, we found that our only successes followed from a direct approach to likely-looking customers. We had to solicit rather than wait to be accosted.

Our attendance varied between fifteen and twenty-five. We had a hard core of regulars and a fluctuating fringe. Oddly enough our regulars included some of the least sympathetic. There seemed to be an optimum group size compatible with general involvement in discussion. A group is too large for this purpose when it breaks spontaneously and frequently into smaller face-to-face groups. Sometimes this retreat into decentralised hubbub can have creative results and for some people it is the only time they venture to say anything.

After about six months we felt that there were enough of the convinced and sympathetic for us to regard ourselves as a bona fide anarchist group. Then we faced the problem of getting out of the sitting room and into the street. There was a division between those who saw little point in "pin-prick" activism and the rest who felt that the meetings were in danger of becoming a self-perpetuating theoretical talking-shop. For example, some of us felt we should actually *do* something to arouse local opinion on the specific issue of school uniform—but the meeting we called to decide what form our action should take became instead a discussion on the merits and demerits of uniform, and our projected action was submerged under the controversy. We attempted to solve this split by increasing the frequency of meetings; alternative ones being concerned with direct action tactics. Before the group finally broke up, the activists had leafleted at a local USAF base, sold FREEDOM and *Peace News* (we took to placing a copy of FREEDOM in the local library and it usually remained on display), picketed pre-election meetings with a "Do-It-Yourself Politics" leaflet, and constructed a couple of banners which were carried in the 1966 Easter March. Our slogans "The State Is Your Enemy" and "Drop Politicians—Not Bombs!" were mentioned in national press reports and on TV.

Towards the end some of us came together to work out the idea of a general link-up of teachers like ourselves—kicking against the system with varying degrees of determination and in no way helped by our isolation from each other. The response to the suggestion for a "Libertarian Teachers' Association" has been encouraging. Perhaps the idea of associating on an occupational basis could be extended to other fields.

Our experience with our rural group taught us that, for some people at least, anarchist ideas are the "good news" that they have been waiting for.



## 7: Community action: Notting Hill

GEORGE CLARK

### NOTTING HILL SUMMER PROJECT

July 29-August 26, 1967

THE IDEA FOR THE SUMMER PROJECT was initiated by the Notting Hill Community Workshop and is being organised by an independent committee of community workers. The organising committee are trying to secure the co-operation of Local Government, the welfare agencies, and all organisations in Kensington and Chelsea for a month-long Project which aims to tackle the problem of Housing in North Kensington and initiate a co-ordinated Play Scheme for the Children. Those responsible for the Project feel the time is right for concerted action in the field of housing and play provision, two problems which cause acute concern, encourage the growth of genuine grass roots community organisations, and make a start on a comprehensive plan which can remove the fundamental problems of a twilight area.

Notting Hill is an area of acute social need—it is a twilight area. The social cost of years of neglect has reached alarming proportions. Something must be done to relieve the desperate plight of families living in overcrowded, inferior and highly-rented accommodation. Playspace for children must be found. Parts of Notting Hill, like many other similar areas in Britain, are moving inexorably from a twilight condition to a social ghetto. We must not let this happen.

It is our experience that the growing expenditure of public funds on the social and other services can often be ineffective and sometimes the priorities seem to us to be wrong. We find that many of those in need are unaware of the services that exist to help them and that many needs are unmet by the existing services. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the fields of urban renewal, housing, and provision for children to play.

Moreover, we believe that the ordinary processes of political democracy cannot be relied upon here to bring about quickly enough the reforms that seem to us to be urgently necessary, without fresh stimulation. Although our views are widely shared there is a lack of properly shared and collated information about actual needs and the potential effectiveness of the existing services on which to base these reforms.

The community in Notting Hill needs to make the connection between the conditions they live in and the way these conditions can change. For this to be possible we believe a systematic approach is called for. Methods are needed which show how the problems are common problems and will suggest ways in which people can ask for

changes that will remove the twilight areas and the slums from the land.

To meet some of these needs we are organising a Summer Project which can go some way towards enabling the community to make the connections between over-long social neglect and the social conditions of a twilight zone. We think this is possible by highlighting the problems connected with housing and by exploring the possibilities of a co-ordinated leisure programme for children where none exists at present.

The housing project involves the setting up of a housing register which is seen as a new way of dealing with a very complex social problem and, at the same time, as a means of enabling people to assert their rights as consumers paying rent for accommodation. Both the housing and the play scheme are being used as a focus for community organising based on the precepts of democratic participation. This summer, people living in Notting Hill will be encouraged to organise themselves into community groups in order that work started can be continued and be sustained throughout the long period that will undoubtedly be needed to bring about overall change.

We recognise that it is a challenging task and we do not underestimate the very considerable difficulties. However, there is already enough work being done to encourage us to believe that a creative community approach can be made to the whole problem of a twilight area. But we also recognise that we cannot do it alone. Help will be needed from all organisations and social agencies in the Borough. We are also appealing for 200 students, teachers, social workers or anybody else who feels they have something to offer, to join with us and make the Summer Project successful. Those who live in the twilight zones are often denied some of the basic liberties enjoyed by the wider society. The Summer Project can provide the basis for redressing some of these wrongs and the means for planned community development which all who live and work in Notting Hill can share in as equals.

We are proposing to create a Housing Register which will be a practical record of all the houses in North Kensington. The Register is expected to cover an estimated 29,000 households in 11,000 houses and reveal new problems as well as information which point the way to long-term solutions. We hope it will provide the means of making known the specific condition of the houses; enable people to make comparisons of the widely differing rents and conditions; and enable the community to establish standards in accommodation for letting.

We hope to cope with the immediate play needs of children in two of the most overcrowded areas, and establish the practice of using unused space on a permanent basis. This will be done by trying to open play streets, school playgrounds, and church halls for intensive play use. Activities from cricket to painting, from acting to messing about, will be the aim on all of these sites. Those coming in to help will be asked to lead play groups and be present on the sites to help the children make satisfying use of each different kind of space.

Enquiries and general information about the Project should be made to George Clark, 60 St. Ervans Road, W.10. Telephone 969 6536.



## 8: The political meaning of the King Hill Campaign

ANDY ANDERSON

THE HUMANITARIAN VALUE OF THE KING HILL CAMPAIGN can no doubt easily be seen. But perhaps this view doesn't make quite so clear the political significance of the situation of the homeless and the King Hill campaign in particular. Yet humanitarianism and socialism (politics) are one. They are inseparable. Homeless people—and particularly homeless families—who reach a point where they feel compelled to go through the indignity of applying to the local authority for welfare accommodation, and are then sent to places like King Hill, deprived of a part of themselves. This degradation takes place slowly—a little at a time. Their self-confidence, which has already been eroded by the various circumstances which led to their homelessness, is further diminished and undermined by virtually having to beg local officials to take pity on them.

These officials are extraordinarily incapable of understanding people. They treat them as if they had committed a crime by becoming homeless. As examples, Colin McLashan (*Observer*, 22.1.67) quotes officials who were highly critical of the BBC film *Cathy Come Home*. They said things like: "The people we try to help were made out to be heroes. We know 90% of them are in trouble of their own making", and "most homeless have been evicted because of non-payment of rent which they could have paid if they'd tried". (A report issued during the campaign by the Kent County Council stated that only 6% of

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ANDY ANDERSON's conclusions are extracted from his account in *Libertarian* (1s. quarterly, 5s. a year, from W. J. Taylor, Scamps Court, Pilton Street, Barnstable, Devon). The campaign for the homeless at King Hill Hostel in Kent (see Brian Richardson's articles in *ANARCHY* 58 and 67) resulted, after a long and determined struggle, in what the *Observer* called "total victory" which has had implications in both Whitehall and other local authorities, and in other successful campaigns, for example that of the Friends of Abridge in Essex.

families had been evicted for non-payment of rent.) Another example of their puerile bigotry was shown when the Local Government Information Office called on officials throughout the country to watch the *Cathy* film and report the "boobs" so that a protest could be made to the BBC.

It's a good thing, paradoxically, that many of the homeless, far from being penitent and grateful, enter the hostels with thinly disguised resentment and anger at such attitudes. Yet homeless people are usually less articulate than most. They are generally unskilled workers (labourers, etc.), people who are bewildered by the complications and the pressures of modern society—bewildered, quite often, simply because, for a variety of good reasons, they lack the energy and the ruthlessness which the modern rat-race demands. For these reasons they get pushed around—by local councillors, by local housing officials, by local doctors, and by local NAB bureaucrats.

### DEHUMANIZATION

So that when they eventually end up in welfare accommodation—such as King Hill was—the families feel they are caught in a web. Wherever they turn, they are faced with a cold, callous reality based on rules, regulations and institutions which they can't understand. Very few of these families have any savings. Their income is usually well below average. As far as King Hill was concerned, many of the husbands had to change their jobs when their families went into the Hostel. Or if they kept their jobs they had to spend a good deal of time and money in travelling, and when they were at work they were pushed around. This is nothing new to them. In this respect their plight is a usual, normal and everyday occurrence. In modern industrial societies, millions are submitted to this treatment. But where homeless families differ is that, in every other aspect of their lives, they also experience the tremendous pressures of a hostile environment.

During the King Hill campaign, we noticed particularly how, when husbands applied for work and explained that their families were at the Hostel, employers treated them with scorn—they just didn't want to know any more. And mothers were treated with exactly the same disdain when they applied for rooms, or a flat or a house. They even got a similar cold treatment from the local tradesmen. Their children were sneered at and snubbed at school. The very name of the Hostel carried a social stigma. And we noticed that the children reacted to this by becoming more wild, more belligerent, more destructive—therefore much more of a strain on their parents. The parents reacted to this and the children reacted to their reaction. Thus, the vicious "family" circle was set up.

So, these families, finding themselves treated like second-class citizens, finding themselves treated like dirt, gradually began to feel like dirt. Within a very short time after entering King Hill, mothers began to let themselves go. They soon began not to care about their personal appearance, about how their children looked, about how dirty their



squalid accommodation in the Hostel became. They began to lose interest in how meals were cooked or whether they were cooked at all. Under these circumstances some people turn in on themselves and become selfish. They react to their difficulties by carping criticism of those in the same plight. Some put the blame on each other for their misery, instead of where it rightly belongs, on those who misadminister welfare accommodation; on the bureaucrats, on the capitalist system which is responsible for the housing crisis. Divisions are created, nurtured, and being used to bring about even greater demoralisation among the people. Under these conditions, solidarity and collective resistance, which alone can bring an end to this misery, tend to lessen.

### SOME REASONS FOR SUCCESS

When we first visited the Hostel in September 1965, we found a small number of families prepared to defy the authorities. Encouraged by the Daniels' success in resisting eviction, they were only too willing to go on the offensive. But they had no clear idea of how.

We were at first regarded with a faint suspicion. But our non-traditional approach quickly cut through this. It became clear that we were not acting only out of pity—that we were not the “social workers” and “do-gooders” of their experience. We talked their language—some of us swore as “good” as they did.

We were able to clarify the prospect of the families themselves being able to take an effective hand in dealing with their own problems. This meant, however, that we became involved with the families to a degree that is not considered to be within the role of traditional politicians. Even some of the non-traditionalists found the going tough. We were not only obtaining information, collecting money, seeking legal advice, phoning contacts, establishing relation with the press, addressing envelopes, arranging transport and making posters, distributing leaflets, organizing demonstrations. We were deeply involved in dozens of other problems, considered marginal by traditional revolutionaries.

Temporary accommodation had to be provided, coal had to be obtained, clothes and toys had to be distributed to the children, and parties organised for them. Medical help and advice about family planning had to be obtained when asked for. Tips had to be given on how to stand up to the local NAB bureaucrats and how to obtain every penny to which each family was entitled.

Only constant attention to these problems ensured sustained cohesion between us. The families began quickly to regain something of what they had lost. Women changed in appearance. Men began to feel like men. They began to regain a fraction of their lost humanity.

After the campaign had been running for just over six months, it was inspiring to see, during interviews on the BBC TV programme *Panorama* how articulate and confident they had become. How sure of their rights, how determined to preserve and extend their position as people—as human beings.

### USE OF THE LAW

We have already described how the campaign aimed at the exposure of some of the things we denounce in modern society. It also exposed the law.

Use of the law by the Kent County Council featured very prominently as the campaign's main technique of gaining national publicity for the plight of homeless families generally and those in Kent in particular. All of the proceedings against the Kent families took place in the High Court. Yet in all but one of them it was a clear manipulation of the law to suit the administrative convenience of local authority. Although the KCC's rules were upheld in court and husbands were sent to prison, it was done through interim injunctions. None of the cases was ever heard.

On November 30th, 1965, Mr. Justice Lawton had stated that “the Courts are not sounding boards for political and social grievances”. The campaign has shown how successfully they can be used for precisely this purpose. Mr. Lawton had claimed that “it was essential for the administration of justice in this country and for the proper administration of Acts of Parliament that orders of the Court should be obeyed”. The repeated and open defiance of such orders by the husbands has secured the triumph of a higher justice and of a higher and more humane morality.

If the husbands are now allowed to live with their families at King Hill Hostel, it is because of the sacrifices of such men as Brian Lomas, Roy Mills and Stan Daniels. When thousands of other people refuse to recognise the legality of orders which reduce their status as human beings, the foundation will have been laid of a higher order and of a better society.

### METHODS AND THE MARXISTS

The campaign was successful because the people involved—homeless and friends—didn't fight on the terms understood by the authorities. The modern capitalist system is very sensitive to interference by people who don't share its basic assumptions. This was shown again and again throughout the campaign. (It is important to note that the desire of most activists to see some concrete and immediate effects of their actions, should not determine the type of action. An example was the picketing of the home of the man mainly responsible for the way Kent's homeless were treated—the Chief Welfare Officer, Dr. A. Elliott. Pickets were there on many occasions, including Christmas Day 1965, without any sign of Elliott himself or of publicity in the press. Yet we discovered from officials, after the campaign had been called off, that this had greatly embarrassed him and had considerably influenced his desire finally to seek a real solution.)

The campaign was successful because the homeless, through regaining some of their self-respect, were prepared to fight back persistently. They were prepared if necessary to break the law—and they did.



Kent communist parties attempted to muscle in on the campaign with the distribution of a duplicated letter. It was couched in begging terms, contained errors of fact, and went out in the names of two members of the King Hill Residents Committee without their agreement. As a result of our representations it was withdrawn before any real damage could be done.

The so-called Marxist and traditional left groups were all merely spectators. They either denigrated the King Hill campaign, or tended to be patronising or vaguely contemptuous about it. They saw it as a "marginal issue"—a local thing unworthy of the attention of "serious politics". For them, politics is something outside of the world of reality. For them, capitalism means slumps, and slumps mean starvation. Out of this will somehow be generated a social consciousness. It is difficult to conceive of an ideology wider off the mark, or more contemptuous of people's real aspirations.

### A BASIS FOR OPTIMISM

Obviously, we're not saying that society can be changed bit by bit through actions of this kind. That would be nonsense. But the fact remains, the KCC—a most powerful local authority—was forced to change its mind and attitude, and this by, relatively, a handful of determined people. Through fundamental grass-roots activity of this sort, in industry and outside of it, people themselves will change. Their growing self-consciousness will prove infectious—because it will be clearly seen that the authorities who govern our lives *from the outside* (the bureaucracy—the managements—whether of industry or trade unions, local government or the State itself) are not almighty, that it is possible to make our will prevail.

Yet people with somewhere to live feel homeless—not part of society—not part of the community. Such homelessness has much deeper and wider social significance. One could say that it is part of a tendency which will become a general condition, if we allow it.

We have mentioned that society is in crisis. This is because people do not submit passively to the actions of the managerialists. They react and struggle against them in many ways. It is a basis for optimism that this reaction, this struggle, contains the seeds of the new society.

## 9: San Francisco style: The diggers and the love revolution

ALEX FORMAN

WHEN A SMALL GROUP OF MEN BEGAN TO PLANT AND DIG upon the Commons on St. George's Hill in Surrey, in 1649, it marked the radical culmination of the new forces of change resulting from the Reformation in Germany. For with the breakdown of the total supremacy of the Roman Church, these new forces were to go far beyond the moderate rebellion of Martin Luther. The destruction of the rationale for the Church's omnipotence led suffering people to question the power of other elements in the collapsing power structure. This can best be seen in the peasants' revolt in Germany and in the English Civil War. For not only was the Church questioned but also the institutions of the state and the system of land ownership.

The Diggers, as the small group of men came to be known, questioned the existing order in its totality. They had grievances against the clergy, the judges, the lawyers, parliament, and the nobles. They requested that the common land, which had belonged to the King who had been executed, be turned over to the people. The people could run the commons collectively and set up a co-operative commonwealth alongside the existing system. The Diggers believed that their system would prove to be so peaceful and filled with reason and love that soon the whole country would join them. They saw no need for violence and refused even to defend themselves when attacked.

The Diggers had two distinct arguments for their cause, one religious and the other political. The religious argument stated that God had not created the earth to be enjoyed by certain men only, but rather as a common treasury for all. The ownership of the land in England had been achieved, from William the Conqueror on, by the use of the sword—indirectly when not directly. Thus land ownership, based upon blood, was immoral. Diggers believed man to have two opposing instincts in his spirit: self-preservation, which accounted for greed and



bloodshed, and common preservation, represented by sharing and love. To act in a morally correct way meant living a life based on common preservation. Diggers also believed that if men lived for a while in accordance with common preservation, their bad instincts would disappear because of the supreme power of universal love.

The Diggers' political argument was that, since the common land once belonged to the King, it now belonged to all those who had fought to end the monarchy. Thus, since masses of people had fought, the masses were entitled to former royal holdings. It's important to note that Gerald Winstanley, the Diggers' leading spokesman, showed an increasing tendency to base their cause on the more concrete political arguments during the movement's brief history. The last important document to come out of the Digger movement was a long appeal from Winstanley to Oliver Cromwell calling for the creation of a co-operative commonwealth in England. This included concrete proposals on how to organize the economy, the schools, the state and judicial system. It favoured private property within the home, family-based settlements, universal manhood suffrage, common ownership of all Crown lands, and common storehouses for all products.

Although the original Diggers didn't succeed in their goal, their thoughts have survived over three hundred years and appeared again in remarkably similar form. Growing out of give-and-take between the New Left and the old beat generation, a hippy culture blossomed in San Francisco in late 1965. Two new factors which made the hippy culture a very distinct phenomenon were, first, a feeling of community (emphasized by individuals frustrated in the New Left), and second, the use of LSD. Cutting across the economic and social differences of many alienated Americans, almost all quite young, a new tribal love culture took root in the Haight-Ashbury district of the city. The new force unleashed by LSD constituted the primary unifying factor in a grouping which ranged from the sometimes violent Hell's Angels motorcycle club to meditating Zen Buddhists. This new culture was at first amorphous but it soon took on the shape of a bohemian community complete with its own merchant class: the hip merchants.

Haight-Ashbury's new love community acquired members primarily from the swollen ranks of alienated young people who were also discovering the "love trip". Conversations on streets in the Haight-Ashbury became filled with talk of love, and then, suddenly appearing in the autumn of 1966, was a group calling itself the Diggers. It began to distribute free food in the local park—food donated by individuals and collected from the surpluses of local markets. The new group also attempted to provide housing for the growing number of young people who had become convinced that they should create a new, loving society.

The important point is that the new Diggers began similarly to the original ones, by simply showing up on the scene and declaring that they acted in accordance with the spirit of universal love. The fact that this love was found partly through LSD—not derived from the Bible—isn't crucial. The original Diggers were also said to be influenced by mystical ideas during their religious gatherings.

At first the coming of the new Diggers was lauded by the entire hippy community. The "Digger thing" of giving things away spread into the community—and beyond into the high schools and colleges of the city. There was a powerful new force in the air as one walked down Haight Street and saw people giving away flowers, fruits and candies. The Diggers in a sense became a new morality, the opposite of industrial capitalism's grab-bag marketplace morality. The moral position of the Diggers can be seen in the fact that after they had been pushed out of various offices by the police and health departments, they were given an office and kitchen privileges by a neighbourhood church. They were looked upon soon as the most beautiful part of the community and then began to be labelled by some as a "community service". It was at this point that an inevitable split occurred, for the Diggers did not want to be a community service—they wanted the community itself to be based on the new morality. A conflict began between the Diggers and the hip merchants.

It was fairly obvious that the merchants were getting rich without helping the hippies on the streets, many of whom were dependent on the Diggers. At a meeting one of the more vocal Diggers asked why, if they were a community service, did they find it so hard to get aid from the community. They wished to see money used to buy space for people—living space, growing space, space to create the new world. Such aims conflicted with those of the business-minded merchants. A full-scale break was developing.

Meanwhile, the Diggers' magic acquired them two farms which are now being established as future food suppliers as well as colonies of freedom from the city hassle. In April of 1967 the movement jumped across an ethnic barrier with the beginning of a Black Man's Free Store in the heart of the Negro ghetto. It was at this time—with the establishment of free-stores in the black community and the Haight-Ashbury, with the beginning of farms and the break with the merchants—that the Diggers repeated Winstanley's course by putting stress on concrete political realities. They spoke now of need for some kind of revolution—and especially in the Black Man's Free Store the work is viewed as the beginning of a revolution. This new tone can best be described by quoting the close of a Digger leaflet distributed in early May, 1967.

"... well love is a slop-bucket and we are the children of awareness but our courage has not yet manifested itself within our floating community. We put down the merchants, the bullshitters, the hustlers and we sit around and it's all the same and there's nothing new under the sun and free food seems a long time gone because we're playing the game of the 1930's, we're the new cry babies and James Dean's tears have finally taken root in a shallow weak kneed series of cabals which expect someone to take care of their living ... some revolution."

This is not to imply that the Diggers are giving up on love. If anything, there's now more love than before. But they're becoming more



aware of the system that prevents love, more aware of the strength of competitive industrial capitalism, since it's threatening their own community. This awareness was demonstrated when four individuals associated with the Diggers, each from a different section of San Francisco, sent a letter to the city government echoing Winstanley's demand for a system of free storehouses to be replenished when empty. The letter argued that our industrial system is capable of feeding everyone if organized for that purpose, and stated that it's a moral and psychological necessity that this be done. Reading this leaflet in the Black Man's Free Store, gazing out the window at prostitutes selling their bodies—beautiful black bodies on a sunny afternoon—I realized that such changes were indeed a necessity. But the Diggers alone can't implement them. It will take a massive alliance of the alienated young people and the political left. Yet the Diggers continue working toward their goal—working through the medium of love, as illustrated by the following exchange heard in the Black Man's Free Store as it opened in April:

*Rembrandt* (a sign-painter passing by): I see that you guys are opening a store. Do you want a sign painted?

*Roy* (a former freedom-fighter in Mississippi, now organizer of the store): Well, this is a free-store so we can't pay you anything, but if you want to paint a sign . . . you see, we give things away.

*Rembrandt*: I never give anything away and nobody has ever given me anything.

*Roy*: Nobody's ever given you anything? . . . See that box of spray paints—if you can use them they're yours. Do you have any money? Here's thirty cents for bus fare.

*Rembrandt*: I don't understand. What are you guys doing here?

*Roy*: See that big appliance and furniture store across the street, with the sign about cashing welfare checks? Well, that's where all the people on welfare go . . . I've taken them there myself. The woman who runs the place came in here awhile ago and asked what we were doing. When I told her we were setting up a free-store she told me that I was in the wrong neighbourhood—that we didn't need a free-store here. She said I should go to the Haight-Ashbury. Then she became really excited and said that we just couldn't do this here and she would stop it. Well, the point is that we're here to give things away so that the people on welfare can have enough money to live better than now. It's the beginning of a revolutionary movement for change.

*Rembrandt*: I see. Well, why don't I paint a nice big sign on the window saying "Watch For Our Grand Opening Day" and write "Free Food, Clothes and Appliances"—that'll really scare her.

*Rembrandt* (after painting): Listen, I have a truck I can borrow so I'll come back and give you guys some glitter and help move some stuff. (He leaves.)

*Roy*: He really did his thing, didn't he? Did you dig it? We turned that cat on to doing his thing and he did it, man, he really did it.

# ABC of ANARCHISM

ALEXANDER BERKMAN

Alexander Berkman believed that "Anarchist books, with few exceptions, are not accessible to the understanding of the average reader. It is the common failing of most works dealing with social questions that they are written in the assumption that the reader is already familiar to a considerable extent with the subject, which is generally not the case at all. As a result there are very few books treating of social problems in a sufficiently simple and intelligible manner."

He set out to remedy this deficiency by writing an "ABC of Anarchism" which now appears in a welcome new edition. The author begins:

"I consider anarchism the most rational and practical conception of a social life in freedom and harmony. I am convinced that its realisation is a certainty in the course of human development. The time of that realisation will depend on two factors: first, on how soon existing conditions will grow physically and spiritually unbearable to considerable portions of mankind, particularly to the labouring classes; and, secondly, on the degree in which anarchist views will become understood and accepted.

"Our social institutions are founded on certain ideas; as long as the latter are generally believed, the institutions built on them are safe. Government remains strong because people think political authority and legal compulsion necessary. Capitalism will continue as long as such an economic system is considered adequate and just. The weakening of the ideas which support the evil and oppressive present-day conditions means the ultimate breakdown of government and capitalism. Progress consists in abolishing what man has outlived and substituting in its place a more suitable environment."

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